

Violence Against Women is a Public Health Problem of Epidemic Proportions

by Rachel Locker

Physical and sexual violence against women is a public health problem of epidemic proportions. 3-4 million women in the United States are battered by their former or current partners annually. These numbers represent documented cases only. Incidence is likely much higher as many never seek assistance. It is estimated that 30%-52% of female murder victims in the United States are killed by a current or former partner.

In addition to the physical injuries related to domestic violence, women in these relationships are at risk for depression, suicide, chronic pain syndromes, alcohol and drug abuse, and numerous other concerns. It has been shown that children raised in these situations are at risk to continue this cycle of violence whether it is domestic or non-domestic. Alcohol and drug use and dependence are also increased among children involved in these situations as are runaways, depression, suicides, and behavior problems. Children in homes where domestic violence occurs are 15 times as likely to be victims of child abuse

Native American Communities are not immune to domestic violence and it plays a tremendous role in the health of any community, Studies have shown an incidence of domestic violence as high as 75% in some areas.

We must place identification and intervention in the foremost part of our mind and take it as a very serious concern. (See downloadable file: *Identification of Domestic Violence*. [MS Word](#) [.DOC] 40K | [Acrobat Reader](#) [.PDF] 16K.)

Medical practitioners are often the first or the only professionals to come into contact with individuals in abusive relationships. We have a unique responsibility and opportunity to intervene. Traditionally health care practitioners are not instructed in such intervention or in how to respond appropriately when domestic violence affects their patient's life.

In October of 1996 Dr.Trujillo added a Domestic Violence Prevention Initiative to improve the response to domestic violence in Indian Country. Since 1992 the Joint Commission Accreditation of Health Care Organizations has required that all accredited hospitals implement policies and procedures for identifying and treating and referring victims of domestic abuse. These standards include educational programs for staff in domestic violence.

These **protocols** are intended to assist medical professionals in complying with these standards and thus improving service to this group of patients. **Training** for health care providers has proven to be very effective in implementing and improving the quality of health care given to battered patients. Policies should include procedures for identifying and documenting partner abuse, providing **patient information** (see list below) about community resources and educating staff on handling these cases.

[Safety plans](#) - MS Word (.DOC) 44K.

[What is domestic violence?](#)- MS Word (.DOC) 948K.

[Available resources](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 56K.

[Domestic violence warning signs](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 56K.

[Domestic violence and children](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 60K.

[Battered woman's Bill of Rights](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 56K.

[Helping in domestic violence](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 56K.

[Cycle of violence](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 56K.

[Teen power and control wheel](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 60K.

[Power and control wheel](#) - Powerpoint (.PPT) 60K.